

Key Principle: Developmentally Appropriate Rating

CANS-NY User Tip Sheet

Ratings should be completed considering the child's developmental and/or chronological age depending on the item. Development is predictable. While every child and environment are unique, we know that many developmental milestones (e.g. walking, talking and toilet training) can be expected by certain ages.

Caregiving Capacity Changes Over Time

Sometimes, a caregiver can be overwhelmed by the amount of daily care an infant or preschooler needs. However, they might have no problem with a fairly independent teenager who has learned some daily living skills. The opposite can also happen.

Developmental Delays and Disorders

Developmental disorders and medical conditions can lead to children having a developmental age that is different from their chronological age. A diagnosis such as Autism or Intellectual Disability often means caregivers need to make many adaptations to meet the child's needs. When rating, be sure to consider how this can impact the needs of the child and caregiver.

Be Flexible in Your Understanding of Strengths

A child's developmental age can affect what kind of strengths emerge. A developmentally young child's greatest strengths may come from their caregivers. It makes sense for these strengths to be the most important to build in a plan of care.

Example: Attention/Concentration (Behavioral Health Module)

Child is rarely able to stay focused on a task for more than 10 minutes. Child cannot remember or complete tasks with more than two steps.



True Age: 10
Developmental Age: 4
Rating: 0

Given the child's developmental age, there is no evidence of a need here.



True Age: 6
Developmental Age: 6
Rating: 1

This should be mentioned, but child is mostly behaving in an age appropriate way.



True Age: 10
Developmental Age: 10
Rating: 2

Action is called for here. Child's attention and concentration are not appropriate for the age.



True Age: 17
Developmental Age: 17
Rating: 3

Attention/concentration is dangerous and disabling here given the child's age and expected behaviors.

Select Notes and Examples

Item (Domain)	Scenario	Rating & Rationale
Talents/Interests (Child Strengths)	Ilana, a 12-year-old girl with an IQ of 60, is very interested in songs from the Paw Patrol television show. She knows all the songs and hums along, taking an iPod with her when she is at large family gatherings and uses it to manage her sensitivity to loud noises.	Rating: Centerpiece Strength (0) Rationale: This is a Talent/Interest that she actively utilizes and should be integrated into a care plan.
Anger Control (Child Needs & Functioning)	Malik, a 14-year-old youngster with a severe intellectual disability has limited expressive language development and so once a week, he throws his body on the floor and screams because he cannot communicate his needs.	Rating: Actionable (2) Rationale: Take Malik’s developmental age into account when planning intervention.
Eating Disturbance (Child Needs & Functioning)	Bobby, age 3 years 8 months, is diagnosed with a developmental disorder that significantly impacts his fine motor control. He isn’t able to pick up most objects or control utensils. He is able to pick up chicken nuggets, so he demands them for every meal. His pediatrician is very concerned that he has nutritional deficiency.	Rating: Immediately Actionable (3) Rationale: Even though Bobby is not diagnosed with a traditional Eating Disorder, his developmental issues make immediate action necessary.
Suicidal Risk: (Child Needs & Functioning)	Rich is a 10-year-old boy diagnosed with both a mild intellectual disability and an anxiety disorder. Recently, on a favorite television program a character said, “Why don’t I just kill myself” and Rich has latched on to that phrase. Whenever he is frustrated, he says “Why don’t I just kill myself.” Rich tells his mom that he doesn’t mean it, and mom isn’t sure he really understands death or the impact of his words.	Rating: Actionable (2) Rationale: If Rich were a typically developing 10-year-old, he might be given a 1 on Suicide Risk. In this case, consider rating a 2. Due to his developmental delays and anxiety it will be difficult to assess his intentions and so suicide prevention action is appropriate.
Supervision (Caregiver Strengths & Needs)	Raven (15) and Mateo (16) live with their grandmother, Jane. Raven is a typically developing teenager who often stays home alone while her grandmother goes out to play bridge with her friends. Mateo on the other hand is diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and is non-verbal. Jane does not fully understand the severity in leaving him alone as he is 16 years old. When Mateo is left home alone, he is unable to prepare his own meals so when Jane comes home, she finds him in the corner with his headphones on and chips scattered all around him. Jane believes he should be able to make a quick bite to eat.	Ratings: 0 and 3 Rationale: For Raven, Grandma would be rated a 0 on Supervision, but for Mateo a 3 would be given.